

The Church of the Servant King

Prophecy Series

(Proph14U_Prophecy in the Prophets_Isaiah_Chps1-39_Part 3)

Chapters 1-39 – Part 3

A Hymn of Praise to be Sung in “That Day” (12:1-6)

Isaiah continues the focus upon “that day” in chapter 12 that he began in chapter 11, verse 10. In the last half of chapter 11, Isaiah describes a picture of the return of the remnant from the “four corners of the earth” (11:12). This return to the land of promise will be prompted by the Messiah Himself (11:10-12) and even “the Gentiles shall seek Him” (11:10).

As this believing remnant returns to the Land of Promise, they will sing a song of praise similar to the song (psalm) of redemption sung by the Exodus generation.

Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for Yah, the Lord, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation. (Isa 12:2)

The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father’s God, and I will exalt Him. (Ex 15:2)

God’s “anger” or “wrath” is mentioned in both hymns. In the song of the Exodus generation, God’s wrath is seen as directed toward the enemies of Israel (i.e. Egypt) from whose hand the Lord had delivered Israel as they moved toward the Promised Land. In the song of “that day” here in Isaiah 12, it was the anger of the Lord (v. 1) directed against His Own people for their covenant violations that had led to their dispersion from the Land among the nations.

Prior to this point in Isaiah’s prophecy, “that day” was one to be dreaded (2:20; 3:18; 4:1; 7:18, 20-21, 23); however, in this passage, “that day” is one to be anticipated in hope and celebrated in song. As the believing remnant lives into the Messianic era, the Lord’s comfort and blessing of them will become a source of evangelism to the Gentile nations (12:3 – “Praise the Lord, call upon His name; declare His deeds among the peoples”). The result will be that the Messiah will be known throughout the earth (12:6 – “For He has done excellent things, this is known in all the earth”).

The “Day of the Lord” is a Day of Wrath (13:6-13)

As mentioned in previous studies, Isaiah, like many OT prophets, interjects references to the eschatological “day of the Lord” into his message about the more imminent “day of the Lord,” i.e. the impending judgment at the hands of Assyria. This pattern was followed when an OT prophet was speaking of the judgment associated with “that day” as well as the responsibilities of God’s people during both of the periods referenced by the phrase “that day.” Lewis S. Chafer comments on this phenomenon as follows.

...there is no chapter and verse boundary in the prophetic books of the Old Testament between that portion of the Scriptures which presented the immediate duty of Israel, and that portion of the Scriptures which presented their future obligation in Messiah’s kingdom. The prophets, while unfolding both of these widely differing obligations, commingle these messages in the text and the different messages are discerned only through an observance of the character of the truth revealed.¹

¹ Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas, Texas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), Volume IV, 172.

Isaiah has just concluded a section (chaps 7-12) which dealt with the folly of Ahaz trusting in Assyria and experiencing destruction as a result. In chapter 13, Isaiah begins a major section of the book that is first devoted to the Lord's judgment against those nations that had been Israel and Judah's enemies (chaps 13-35) and then illustrates how trust in the Lord would result in deliverance through Hezekiah's example (chaps 36-39). In chapters 13-35, we will see large sections devoted to the eschatological period that is still future and to be fulfilled.

Isaiah's proclamation against Babylon in verses 1-5 of chapter 13 is written in language that is symbolic of the Messiah's triumph over the world forces that are opposed to Him at his Second Advent. So, even verses 1-5 carry eschatological overtones. Even though Assyria was the imminent threat to Israel and Judah at this point in Isaiah's ministry, it is interesting that Isaiah first mentions Babylon, a nation that did not come into its own until about a century later. Since its first mention in Scripture (see Gen 11) in association with the tower of Babel, Babylon was a symbol of self-exalting pride.

Babylon deserved God's wrath, for that city had long been a rallying point of anti-God activity. From its very beginning (Gen. 11:1-9) it had been characterized by rebellion against God. Over the centuries, as various dynasties ruled over that city, it was viewed as a place of hatred against the God of Israel. Even in the Tribulation it will be a center of hatred against God (Rev. 17-18).²

When Isaiah wrote this passage, Babylon was a real city or entity within Assyria, but Isaiah used it to represent all the nations that shared its traits (Gen 9:20-25 cf. Re 17-18).

Isaiah wrote these messages when Assyria was about to attack the Syro-Palestine area. The coming devastation caused by the Assyrians would have a tremendous impact on Israel and also on other nations of the Near East. The culmination of Assyrian attacks came when Sennacherib, king of Assyria, sacked the city of Babylon in 689 B.C., thus showing that Babylon, the greatest city in its day, was not immune to the advancing Assyrians.³

In Isaiah's day that judgment was coming because of the tremendous political turmoil of the next several decades that would culminate with the fall of Babylon to the Assyrians in 689 B.C. That political turmoil was similar to the judgment which will come on the whole world just before God establishes His millennial kingdom on the earth.⁴

The eschatological overtones are especially pronounced in verses 6-13 of this chapter since they have parallels in the description of the period leading up to the 2nd Advent of Christ (i.e. the Tribulation) and the 2nd Advent itself. The judgment associated with the Messiah-Christ's 2nd Advent will cause extreme discomfort that Isaiah compares to a woman in childbirth (v. 8). Isaiah's description of this "day" finds parallel in several OT passages (see Jer 4:31; 6:24; 13:21; 22:23; 30:6; 48:41; 49:22, 24; 50:43; Micah 4:9-10; Ezek 32:7; Joel 2:10, 30-31, 3:15, 16; Zech 14:6-7; Haggai 2:6-7, 21-22 cf. Matt 24:29). So many will die in battle against the Lord that a man will be more scarce than the gold of Ophir – a town that was probably located on the southwestern coast of Arabia (see Job 22:24; 28:16).

² See John A. Martin, "Isaiah" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Walvoord, John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, editors (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc., 1983, 1985), 1059. See also Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah," *Expository Notes* – on compact disc, (August 2003 edition) for similar comments.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Israel Exalted Above Egypt (19:16-25)

After devoting verses 1-15 to a description of God's judgment of Egypt, Isaiah begins to describe the blessing of Egypt (and Assyria) in the following verses. Verses 16 and 17 serve as a pivot between these two ideas. The phrase "in that day" appears six times in the 10 verses to follow (vv. 16-25). This phrase most often depicts a scene of judgment followed by blessing, especially when used with eschatological overtones as is the case in these verses. The judgment in view that is being used as a backdrop for the more imminent judgment of ancient Israel and Judah is the judgment associated with the 2nd Advent of Christ. In like manner, the blessing in view is the blessing associated with the Messianic kingdom's establishment when Israel will be in a position of prominence among the Gentile nations of the world including her former enemies such as Egypt and Assyria. Isaiah begs the question from his listeners of why they should turn to Egypt (and Assyria) for help when one day Egypt (and Assyria) will turn to the Lord for their deliverance?

In verses 16-17, Isaiah reminds his listeners that in a future "day," Egypt will be fearful of the land of Israel because it is from the land of Israel (Canaan) that judgment will be meted out to the nations of the earth by none other than the Messiah Himself.

I will declare the decree: The Lord [*God the Father*] has said to Me [*God the Son*], You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and **I will give You the nations for Your inheritance**, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. **You [*God the Son*] shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.** (Psa 2:7-9)

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. **Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.** And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (Re 19:11-16)

In verse 18, Isaiah mentions that "in that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Caanan and swear by the Lord of hosts." Considering the devastation associated with God's judgment at the 2nd Advent which comes on the heels of the widespread death associated with the judgments of the Tribulation, five cities may represent the remaining population of Egypt. Note the spread of peace from a few cities (v. 18) to an entire country (v. 19) to the whole world (v. 23).

The "language of Caanan" will be Hebrew since Caanan is the residence of the nation Israel in those days. Isaiah does not mean that these Egyptians will give up their language; rather, they will speak it in order to conduct business. The city that is called the "City of Destruction" should be translated the "City of the Sun" or the 'City of Righteousness.' The former rendering is based upon the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Latin Vulgate. The latter rendering is based upon the Septuagint. It has been speculated that Jewish scribes were probably belittling the city which was known by its Greek name – "City of the Sun" – by changing the word which meant "sun" to the word for 'destruction.'⁵

⁵ Earl D. Radmacher, *The Nelson Study Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 1142.

In the same way that Abraham built an altar to express his gratitude and commitment to the Lord (Gen 12:8) and Jacob set up a pillar as a memorial to God's covenant with him (Gen 28:22) and Joshua set up a stone for a witness to the Lord's faithfulness (Josh 24:26-27) so will these Egyptians set up an altar to the Lord in Egypt (v. 19 – 20). When the Egyptians call out for help, God will send them a Deliverer – the Savior. This is just the opposite of what occurred during the Exodus. As a result of God's discipline of Egypt, those who remain will be believers who will worship the Lord for His faithfulness and deliverance. This is a picture of reconciliation.

In addition to reconciliation between God and man, there will be reconciliation between nations that were formerly enemies. Egypt and Assyria (modern-day Iraq) will serve the Lord together (v. 23). There was a highway between these powers during Isaiah's day; however, armies of the two powers used it for war preparations.

There will be equality between Israel and her former enemies (v. 24). Through Israel, all of the nations of the earth will be blessed (Ge 12:3), but blessed equally with Israel. Israel's prominence will be due to the fact that Jerusalem is the seat of the Messiah's rule and reign of blessing.

Premillennialists interpret this passage as a reference to the Millennium. Amillennialists see this passage being fulfilled in the present age as Gentiles are one with Jews in Christ, thus a spiritualized interpretation. Of course, The Church of the Servant King subscribes to the premillennial view of this passage. Also, we recognize that the point that Isaiah is making is that if Israel turns to the nations in trust, she will forfeit her ministry to them. Instead, she is to be the means by which those nations turn to Yahweh and partner with her to enjoy His blessings.⁶

Victory, Preservation and Regathering of God's People (24:1-27:16)

This large passage depicts God's victory over the entire earth for the sake of His elect. Chapter 24 describes God's judgment and overthrow of the earth. Chapter 25 is a responsive praise by those whom He has preserved. Chapters 26 and 27 for the most part describe the regathering and restoration of God's people. This entire section is couched in messianic and eschatological terminology.

The theme of this section is the triumph of God over His enemies for His people. Isaiah developed this theme by picturing the destruction of one "city" ("the city of chaos" [v. 10], the city of man, really the whole world) and the establishment of another city (Mount Zion, Jerusalem, the city of God). These two "cities" are the focal points of the judgment and restoration that Isaiah alluded to in the preceding oracles. As the city of man falls under divine judgment, the songs of God-neglecting man disappear; and as the city of God appears, the songs of the redeemed swell.⁷

The original settings of the prophecies that make up this section are even more difficult to nail down than those in the foregoing oracles. Chapters 24—27 develop the calls expressed in 2:2-4 and 5: calls to the nations and to God's people to come to Jerusalem, the magnet of the earth in the future. The structure of the passage is chiasmic also centering on Mount Zion (25:6-12).⁸

⁶ Constable, "Isaiah" – *Expository Notes*. Also, Martin, "Isaiah," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary – Old Testament*, 1066-67.

⁷ Constable, "Isaiah."

⁸ Ibid.

- A** The Lord's harvest from a destroyed world (24:1-13: destruction, 1-12; gleanings, 13)
- B** The song of the world remnant (24:14-16a)
- C** The sinful world overthrown (24:16b-20)
- D** The waiting world (24:21-23)
- E** The song of the ruined city (25:1-5)
- F** Mount Zion (25:6-12)
- E'** The song of the strong city (26:1-6)
- D'** The waiting people of God (26:7-21)
- C'** Spiritual forces of evil overthrown (27:1)
- B'** The song of the remnant of the people (27:2-6)
- A'** The Lord's harvest from a destroyed people (27:7-13: destruction, 7-11; gleanings, 12-13)⁹

There is chronological progression in this eschatological section from the Tribulation (24:1-20) to the Second Coming (24:21-23) to the Millennium (chs. 25—27). The millennial sections explain various aspects of God's activity during this time.¹⁰

In chapter 24, there are parallels to the devastation of the Flood of Genesis 6-9. The Lord will preserve believers during Israel's "last days" leading up to the 2nd Advent (i.e. the Tribulation) while at the same time judging the earth and its unbelieving population. This judgment is not to be confused with the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennium; rather, it is a judgment for the purpose of cleansing the earth in preparation for the establishment of His righteous reign on the earth. Thus, it is a temporal judgment. The Great White Throne Judgment is a judgment that has eternal ramifications. Those who die in the temporal, earth related judgment during the seven year Tribulation and who are unbelievers will stand before God at the Great White Judgment Throne at the end of the Millennium period in their resurrection body for the purpose of being condemned to the Lake of Fire (see Rev 20:11-15). So, in chapter 24, we see a comparison between what the Lord did in the day of Noah to the unbelieving world and what He will do during the "last days" of Israel (specifically the Tribulation) to the unbelieving world.

In 24:1-3, the Lord does the reverse of what He did during the Creation. He devastates the earth instead of bringing order out of chaos as in the Creation/Restoration of Genesis. Of course, there will be restoration associated with His 2nd Advent, but not until the judgment that devastates the earth occurs. This judgment will affect people in all types of positions – religious, domestic, economic, finance, etc. One's title, position or economic status will not matter. All of these things happen because "the Lord has spoken this word" (v. 3) – a euphemism for God's sovereignty and omniscience acting in harmony.

In 24:4-6, Isaiah indicates that it is the people of the earth (not just the earth itself) that will be the objects of God's judgment. Isaiah explains the reason that the earth has been defiled by its inhabitants (v. 5) – "because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." This is certainly a passage that is subject to interpretation; however, I believe what Isaiah is indicating here is that the earth's environment will suffer because of man's disobedience to God's standards as expressed in His word. Disobedience to God's word opens the door of the soul of man to seek fulfillment through the fullest expressions of greed and exploitation of his surroundings. In doing so, man justifies his actions with a relatively righteous morality ("changed the ordinance"). In my opinion, the phrase "the everlasting

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

covenant” probably relates to the conscience of man. After the Fall in the Garden of Eden, God used the conscience of man to be the administrative rule of life in the subsequent dispensation (i.e. the Age of Conscience). It was this “conscience” that became “seared” through negative volition on the part of man toward God and His will (see Rom 1:18-32 cf. 2 Thess 2:9-12; 1 Tim 4:2). So, man failed in His administrative responsibilities given to him in the first dispensation after the Fall (i.e. the Age of Innocence) and it has been a downward spiral ever since. As Isaiah and other Scripture indicates, human history will continue in its downward spiral and that downward spiral will culminate with the events of the Tribulation leading up to the 2nd Advent of Christ. As Isaiah indicates in 24:6, the Lord will leave a remnant (“few men are left”) and we know this remnant to consist of only believers.

All of the things people normally associate with happy times (i.e. wine, music, song, etc. – vv. 7-9) will not produce the happiness they seek. The vine will have been destroyed through the “burning” (v. 6) of drought that is a part of this judgment. Isaiah describes the world (the “city”) as one of “confusion.” Actually, the Hebrew word here (“tohu”) could be translated “meaninglessness” or “empty” or “without form” as in Genesis 1:2. This is an apt description of where people will find themselves during the Tribulation as one aspect of normal life after another is destroyed in conjunction with the judgments of that period. The desolation will be so severe that those who try to subsist will find it difficult to get food for the produce of the land will be as if the harvest had already occurred (v. 13).

In contrast to the song of the remnant who survive this period, Isaiah saw the distress of those who would suffer the full force of God’s judgment in that day and he pronounced woe upon himself (v. 16). Isaiah most likely expressed these thoughts because he saw the treachery that was pervasive in his day and he knew that he would be cursed by association with them should God’s judgment fall on his generation.

In that day, there will be nowhere to flee to escape (vv. 17-18). The judgment upon the earth will be like the day of the Flood upon the earth when the “windows” of heaven opened to produce the rain that represented God’s judgment (cf. v. 18). Judgment also arose from terrestrial sources in the day of Noah as was also the case in Moses’ day with earthquakes that devoured the rebellious and as will be the case in the future “day of the Lord.”

In 24:21-23, Isaiah’s description of the judgment to come will include the rebellious authorities in the heavenly realm (“host of exalted ones” cf. Eph 6:12) and in the earthly realm (Matt 8:29; Rev 12-13; 19:19; 20:2, 10). Before God punishes them, He will confine them to a pit (cf. 2 Pe 2:4; Jude 6; Rev 17:8; 19:17-18; 20:1-3, 11-15). The period of “many days” (v. 22) is most likely a reference to the Millennium. The sun and the moon were important sources of deification in the ancient mid-East, but they will be disgraced by this judgment (v. 23 cf. Re 21:23).